

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between THE Lines™



The Underground Always Finds a Way

Michigan's queer bars and social clubs have been adapting to survive for a century — and they're not done yet

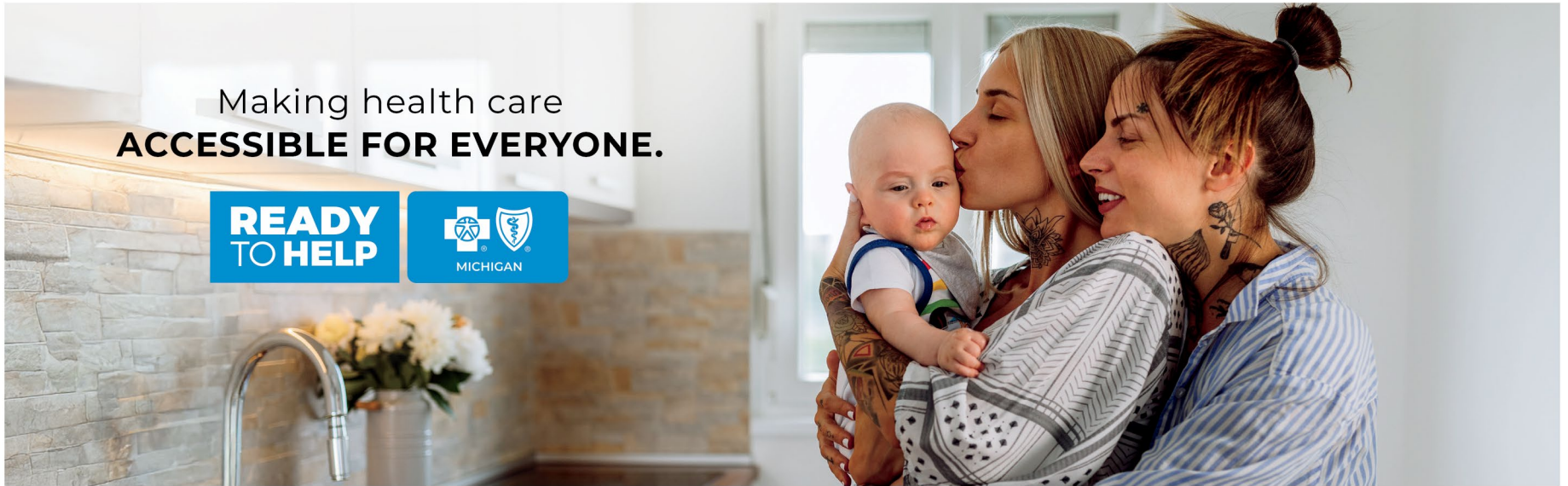
By Samuel Schwindt

PRIDE GETS LOUD
More than 40 festivals meet the moment

SILENCED BY HEADLINES
The press failed trans Epstein survivors

EXTRA CREDIT IN HEELS
A teen drag artist hits the stage

Making health care
ACCESSIBLE FOR EVERYONE.



With Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network, you get the largest network of doctors and hospitals in the state. Plus, you will never feel far away wherever you go with access to them through our easy-to-use mobile app and 24-Hour Nurse Line. We are always ready to help.

Learn more at
MIBlueDaily.com/ReadyToHelp

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

Great Lakes Bay
Health Centers

PrEPing
the Peninsulas

PrEP Made Simple. PrEP Made Possible.

Take control of your health with PrEP—a daily pill proven to prevent HIV. Through Great Lakes Bay Health Centers' telehealth program, getting started is easier than ever.

No waiting rooms. No judgment. Just care.

Start your PrEP journey today at
Greatlakesbayhealthcenters.org

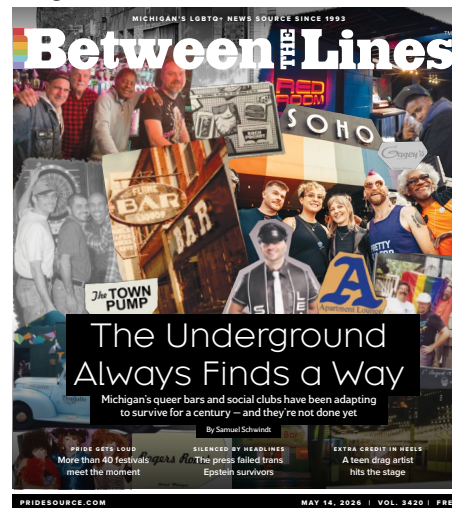
Affordable coverage for Medicaid patients.
Cost may vary based on insurance coverage and location.





- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 Pride Is Loud This Summer, and That's the Whole Point
- 8 Mental Health Urgent Care Is Here When You Can't Wait (Sponsored)
- 10 Creep of the Week: Conservatives Interfering with the College Mission to Make Everyone Gay
- 13 The Scroll: Trans House Candidate Joanna Whaley Faces Deadname Attack From Fellow Democrat
- 14 The Underground Always Finds a Way: Michigan's Queer Bars and Social Clubs Have Always Adapted
- 16 Trans Lucent: Where Are the Tears for Ava Cordero?
- 18 She Found Drag in Fifth Grade. Mow Mary Magdalene Towers Is Ready for Her Close-Up.

Page 14



Delivered ~~Straight~~ to Your Mailbox

Support LGBTQ+ journalism and get BTL delivered to your door for just \$95/year or \$10/month.

WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE

VOL. 3420 • MAY 14, 2026

ISSUE 1300

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

www.pridesource.com
Phone 734-263-1476

PUBLISHERS

Benjamin Jenkins
benjamin@pridesource.com

Publishers Emeritus: Jan Stevenson & Susan Horowitz

EDITORIAL

Executive Editor and Brand Director

Chris Azzopardi
chris@pridesource.com

Director of Content and Community Engagement

Sarah Bricker Hunt
sarah@pridesource.com

CREATIVE

Cartoonist

Paul Berg

Graphic Designer

Sarah Wolf

Contributing Photographer

Andrew Potter

ADVERTISING & SALES

sales@pridesource.com

Carolyn Cardenas
734-263-1476
carolyn@pridesource.com

Tim Powers
734-263-1475
tim@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

MEMBER OF

Michigan Press Association
National LGBT Media Association
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber
Q Syndicate
Society of Professional Journalists

2022 AWARD WINNER



Pride Source

@pridesourcemedia

@pridesourcemedia

Pride Source

@pridesource.com

Email your op-eds to
editor@pridesource.com

Sign up online to receive our e-digest

Our rate cards are available online. All material appearing in Between The Lines is protected by federal copyright law and may not be reproduced in whole or part without the permission of the publishers. Between The Lines is supported by many fine advertisers, but we cannot accept responsibility for claims made by our advertisers, nor can we accept responsibility for materials provided by advertisers or their agents.

Copyright 2026

5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY KELLI DUNHAM

Late spring in Michigan means three things: wildly inaccurate weather forecasts, small talk about aforementioned hard-to-predict weather and an absolutely packed calendar of queer joy. Whether you're craving bass so loud it rearranges your organs or a place to show off your new dancing unicorn rainbow two-piece, jumping into some of these activities promises a heap of community-fueled joy. Added benefit: Think of these events as warm-ups for the approaching Pride season. You wouldn't run a marathon without stretching first, right?



Stacey Hotwaxx Hale. Courtesy photo

1 Move at Movement

Detroit's Movement Festival is a historic music festival, yes, but it's also a yearly reminder that queer people have always been part of shaping electronic music culture, both locally and globally. This year's lineup includes LGBTQ+ artists like Beige and legendary house DJ Stacey Hotwaxx Hale, alongside showcases from Detroit icons including Carl Craig's Detroit Love and DJ Minx. Hart Plaza transforms into a joyful maze of music, sweat, sunglasses and deeply committed dancing. Honestly, it's hard to stay cynical while somebody nearby is wearing silver platform boots at 2 p.m. on a Sunday.

May 25–27, Hart Plaza (1 Hart Plaza, Detroit). movementfestival.com.



Melanie Martinez Photo: Instagram/@littlebodybigheart

2 Mood-Swing with Melanie Martinez

We know you're busy swimming and moving and catfighting. But if your teenage self loved theatrical pop, spooky aesthetics and aggressively emotional lyrics, ask Current Self to take a minute out and do a solid for Future Self who will be grateful you bought tickets for the Melanie Martinez's Hades: The Sacrifice tour. The bisexual icon Martinez has built a massive audience (13 million on Instagram alone) by leaning fully into strange, vulnerable, hyper-creative storytelling rather than sanding down the weird edges.

July 18, 7 p.m., Little Caesars Arena (2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit). melaniemartinezmusic.com.



Catfight for the Crown 2024. Photo: That Gay Photographer

3 Cheer On Catfights

Formerly known as Catfight for the Crown, this beloved Pride-season showcase returns with a different format and exactly the same commitment to queer brilliance. Catfight Against the Crown skips the competition aspect in favor of a celebration of artistry: ballroom, drag, burlesque, comedy and glorious theatrical nonsense.

The event supports the Ruth Ellis Center and its work with at-risk LGBTQ+ young people. So yes, you can absolutely enjoy a wildly over-the-top night at Saint Andrew's Hall (dress code: better regrettable than forgettable) while helping fund real community support. That's what we call multitasking.

June 13, 6 p.m., Saint Andrew's Hall (431 E. Congress St., Detroit). instagram.com/catfightforthecrown.

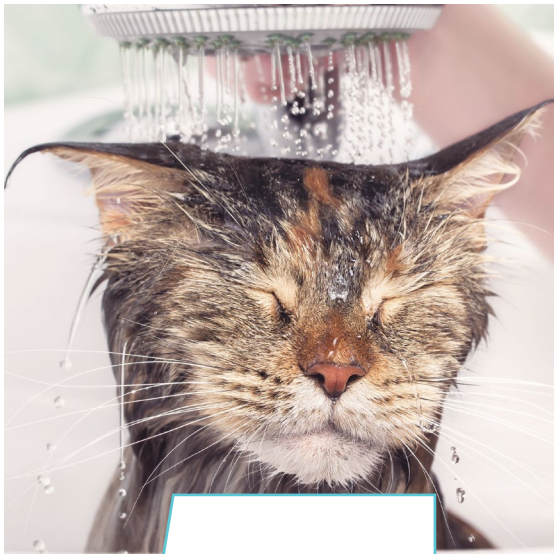


Parasol Pool Party. Photo: Instagram/@parasol_detroit

Dive Into Parasol Pool Party Season

There are few better summer coping mechanisms than this Peak Gay equation: loud dance music plus inviting swimming pool equals bliss. Parasol Pool Party season kicks off May 23 with the first of five Midtown Detroit parties promising music, performances, themed chaos and a very welcoming crowd. It's one of those events where you can show up solo and leave with three new Instagram mutuals, somebody's sunglasses accidentally in your tote bag and renewed faith in humanity.

May 23, 1-7 p.m. and future dates, Common Pub (5440 Cass Ave., Detroit). [instagram.com/parasol_detroit](https://www.instagram.com/parasol_detroit).



Hydrate

A shocking percentage of Pride-season problems could be improved by sitting down for 10 minutes and drinking some water. Well, and by staying less attached to fewer of our exes, perhaps, but baby steps and all that.

Michigan's queer summer calendar is about to become an endurance event: festivals, patios, concerts, drag shows and pool parties. Set yourself a goal of keeping water (and while we're at it, sunscreen) within arm's reach at all times. And yes, actually drinking the water is an important part of the process. Bonus: Hydration improves your skin tone. Consider it a nod to queer vanity if texting your friends "did you drink water today?" doesn't feel ironic enough for you. Hydration is community care.

SOBRITEA

A TEA DANCE WITHOUT ALCOHOL

215 West Nine Mile Road
Ferndale, MI 48220

Sunday 6.14.26
4-8pm

Drag performances by

Laila Grace Couture Sirinity Sapphire Emma Sapphire La Bubbleina Latinx

& FERNDALE'S SEXIEST GOGO DANCERS

Sponsored by
McMillan Behavioral Health and
Addiction Services

\$10 Ticket
donation goes
to Ferndale Pride

Only nonalcoholic beverages will be
available for purchase during this event.

mark-mcmillan.com

Pride Is Loud This Summer, and That's the Whole Point

More than 40 fests across Michigan are ready to meet the moment — with zero plans to be quiet about it

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Look, nobody is pretending this is a normal summer. Every seat in the Michigan Legislature is on the ballot this fall. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer — one of the most reliably pro-LGBTQ+ governors this state has ever had — is in her final year in office. Michigan's political landscape is shifting in ways we'll be reporting on and living with for years.

And yet, here comes Pride season anyway. Forty-plus festivals, stretching from Ironwood to Adrian, from Mackinac Island to the Indiana border, rolling out from late May through September. Sequins will be worn. Parade routes will be walked. Someone will cry at a drag performance and immediately claim they had something in their eye.

Joyful defiance has always been Pride's whole thing. This summer, it's hitting a little different.

The season opens May 30 with Ferndale Pride, Michigan's largest free, open-to-the-public LGBTQ+ festival and the unofficial star of the state's queer summer. The street fair runs 12:30-10 p.m. along West Nine Mile Road between Woodward and Livernois, spilling onto Planavon and Allen streets with more than 200 vendors, performers and community organizations filling every corner.

This year's lineup is stacked. Multi-award-winning artist Alise King headlines the Credit Union One Performance Stage at Planavon, with drag shows hosted by Mia Cole and Bentley James, a newcomers showcase hosted by Ariana Love Hunter and music from deadbeatdad, Elspeth Tremblay & The Treatment and more throughout the day. The Woodward Dance Stage closes with Zach Witness, with sets from Andromeda Colt, WE1SMAN, Ashton Swinton and others leading up to the headliner. Kicking off the whole thing at the opening ceremony is Baddie Brooks, Miss Trans Michigan 2025, who will read a poem in honor of trans icon Marsha P. Johnson. Baddie Brooks, a Black trans Detroit musician, released her debut album "Reclamation," a 16-track fusion of house, pop and R&B, in 2023, making her one of the community's most compelling emerging voices. Brooks has also served as a Grand Marshal for NYC Pride and received the Louis Armstrong Jazz Award. BTL readers



Motor City Pride 2025. Photo: Andrew Potter

know her well; we've been along for the ride since well before the crown.

Beyond the stages, there's plenty to keep guests busy from the jump — a children's area with aerial acrobatics, a Genisys Credit Union climbing wall, Reading with Royalty (ASL interpreted, hourly through 7 p.m.) and a baby feeding area with lactation specialists on-site. A sensory zone offers a quiet retreat for those who need one. Proceeds benefit Affirmations, Transgender Michigan, TGDetroit and several other organizations doing essential work across the region.

From there, Pride season radiates in every direction, including north. The Upper Peninsula shows up strong this year with multiple celebrations of its own. Ironwood Pride heads into its sixth annual festival June 5-6 at City Square Park, thrown by the same

organizers who bring the UP queer community together year-round for things like Fruity Yoga and a punk-rock prom held, as God intended, at an Episcopal Church. UP Rainbow Pride in Marquette takes over Mattson Lower Harbor Park on June 13, running noon to 11 p.m. and turning 11 this year — old enough to know exactly what it's doing.

June gets busy fast. Motor City Pride returns to Hart Plaza June 6-7. Michigan's largest LGBTQ+ celebration (paid tickets required) spreads across three stages and wraps Sunday with the traditional Pride parade stepping off at noon from Fort and Griswold streets through downtown Detroit.

After an opener by Baddie Brooks, Saturday's Pride Stage headliner is Jai Rodriguez, best known as the culture guide on Bravo's original Emmy-winning "Queer Eye for the Straight

Guy" — and, as of June 12, a cast member in "Stop! That! Train!," the new RuPaul action-comedy hitting theaters the week after the festival. Rodriguez's stage roots run deep. He made his Broadway debut as Angel in "Rent," holding the distinction of being the youngest person ever cast in that role.

Sunday's Pride Stage brings drag royalty, with "RuPaul's Drag Race" Season 16 standout Mhi'ya Iman Le'Paige and Season 2 veteran Jessica Wild — who returned to place third on "All Stars" Season 8 — joining the lineup alongside Tiny Jag. The Detroit rapper made headlines earlier this year when she pulled her music from Spotify over the platform's connections to immigration enforcement advertising, a very on-brand move for an artist whose whole career has centered on authenticity and accountability. On the

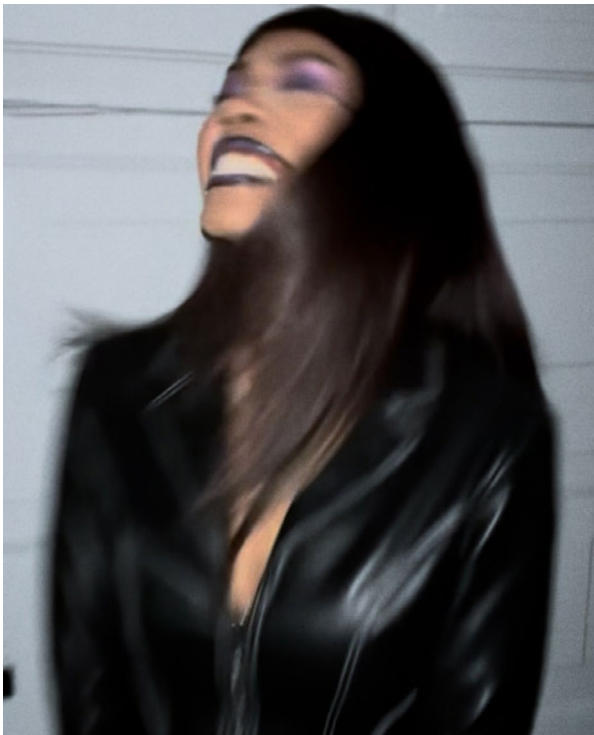
Dance Stage, Stacey Hotwaxx Hale — Detroit's Godmother of House and a foundational figure in the city's LGBTQ+ nightlife history — anchors what should be a full, sweaty, joyful Saturday night.

Kalamazoo Pride opens its two-night run June 5 at Arcadia Creek Festival Place with the Mx/Ms/Mr Kalamazoo Drag Pageant hosted by show director Monique Madison, alongside 2025's Ms Kalamazoo Pride, Jade Harmony.

Grand Rapids Pride reclaims Calder Plaza June 20-21 for a free, ungated two-day festival with 150-plus vendors and a sensory space. Lansing Pride's June 27 festival in Old Town caps a full week of events that kicks off June 3 with a Pride flag-raising ceremony — because if some folks would rather not see the flag flying at Stonewall National Monument, Lansing will just put up a few more.

June keeps going from there. Lowell Pride rallies under the theme "Pride Over Fear" on June 6 at the Riverwalk. Downriver Pride takes over downtown Wyandotte June 20-21. South Haven Pride makes its park a two-day love letter to showing up exactly as you are, June 27-28. And if you somehow make it to June 28 without attending anything, Bluewater Pridefest in Port Huron, DeWitt Pride in the Park and Berkley Pride are all happening simultaneously. We fully support your crisis of abundance.

July brings Hotter Than July, produced by LGBT Detroit, the city's premier Black LGBTQ+ service provider and one of Michigan's most enduring community institutions. Founded on the seven principles of Kwanzaa, Hotter Than July grew from a 1995 organizing meeting in a one-bedroom apartment near what is now Comerica Park into the world's longest-running, uninterrupted Black LGBTQ+ Pride celebration, now in its 31st year. The week-long programming runs the full range: candlelight vigil, a boat ride on the Detroit River, a film festival, the Annual Gathering for LGBT+ Issues and the iconic Palmer Park Picnic, which draws around 20,000 people from across the region and beyond. After-parties and a Sunday brunch close out the week. It's the kind of event that takes both the joy and the work of community seriously, and in 2026, that combination feels especially worth showing up for.



(Top) We1sman, (Bottom) Tiny Jag. Photos: Instagram

Royal Oak Pride fills downtown Royal Oak on July 25 with Sidetrack Bookshop's returning authors panel, a family zone and entertainment to be announced.

A late-summer staple, Ann Arbor Pride kicks off the hottest month of the year with its annual festival on Aug. 1.

Transgender Pride in the Park arrives in Ferndale on Aug. 22 and Jackson Pride brings it home Aug. 29 with a full festival at Horace Blackman Park and a rooftop after-party running until midnight.

Then, in September, Straits Pride closes the season on Mackinac Island, sailing under the theme "Anchored in Love." Honestly, that's where we'll leave it too.

Find the full Michigan Pride calendar at pridesource.com.



Emma's Wedding(s)

A WORLD PREMIERE
BY **CAREY CRIM**
DIRECTED BY **KATE THOMSEN**

A COMEDY ABOUT FINDING THE ONE...
...FOR THE FOURTH TIME.

JUN 25 - AUG 30

PurpleRoseTheatre.org
(734) 433-7673
@PurpleRoseTheatre
137 Park St. Chelsea, MI



Mental Health Urgent Care Is Here When You Can't Wait



CNS Healthcare's walk-in service fills a critical gap for LGBTQ+ folks in the Metro Detroit area

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

If you've ever tried to get a mental health appointment in a hurry, you know the feeling: You need to talk to someone now, but the earliest opening is three weeks out. By then, you might feel completely different — or you might have spent three weeks getting worse.

For LGBTQ+ people, that gap in care is particularly stark. A 2024 Center for American Progress survey found that only 10% of LGBTQ+ people reported having excellent mental health, and discrimination significantly affected the well-being of 52% of LGBTQ+ adults — a number that climbs to 74% for transgender adults. According to the Trevor Project's 2024 national survey, 84% of LGBTQ+ young people wanted mental health care in the past year, yet half of those who needed it were not able to get it.

These aren't abstract statistics for most people reading this. They're Tuesday afternoons when the anxiety is too loud to ignore, or the moment a loved one's mood shift starts to feel urgent. CNS Healthcare, a community mental health organization

serving Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, launched a program in October 2025 designed specifically for that in-between space — when things are too serious to wait and not quite serious enough for the emergency room.

CNS Healthcare's mental health urgent care program offers same-day, walk-in behavioral health services across three Metro Detroit locations. No referral is needed. You don't need insurance. You don't even have to live within a specific service area. As a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic, CNS is able to provide services to anyone, regardless of insurance status, income or where they call home.

Karla Heinig, mental health urgent care supervisor at CNS Healthcare, describes the program's sweet spot in familiar terms. "Think about it like you would a regular urgent care," she says. "If you had a cut on your arm, you would go to urgent care, and maybe they can help you tend to the cut — but if you broke a bone, you would probably be going to the ER." The same logic applies here: If you're in an escalating crisis, can't

wait for a callback, but aren't at the point of needing 24-hour inpatient care, this is where CNS wants to meet you.

When someone walks in, staff conduct a comprehensive triage and assessment to figure out what level of care makes the most sense for that moment. If medication needs adjusting, they can connect you with a prescriber the same day. If you've been off your medication for weeks and are starting to feel it, they can help bridge you back to services faster than a standard outpatient wait would allow. If you're struggling with thoughts of substance use and need support before things escalate, that's also within scope. And if it turns out a higher level of care is needed after all, CNS staff will help coordinate transportation and get you where you need to go.

Since opening, the program has logged more than 600 encounters with community members — a number that reflects real, unmet need in the region.

Services include peer support (speaking with someone who's been in a similar situation), nursing services and education, crisis counseling, and intake appointments to begin longer-term mental health services. The program serves all ages, from children to elderly adults.

For the LGBTQ+ community specifically, Heinig is clear that CNS is a place where

people can expect to be seen fully. "CNS in general is a very inclusive organization," she says. "Anybody, regardless of your race, your gender identity, how you believe, who you identify as, are welcome to receive services and we would be more than happy to assist those folks and get them connected and supported in the best way that would lead them to the best positive outcome for them."

Locations and hours

CNS Healthcare's three mental health urgent care sites are open Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

- Wayne County: 15560 Joy Road, Detroit
- Oakland County: 600 N. Telegraph Road, Suite 300, Pontiac
- Macomb County: 21331 Kelly Road, Eastpointe

Walk-ins are welcome at all three locations. For more information, visit cnshealthcare.org or call 800-615-0411. If you're in immediate crisis, call or text 988.

This content was made possible through our partnership with CNS Healthcare.



walk in. be seen. get support.



Mental health needs don't always happen on a schedule. CNS Healthcare provides walk-in mental health urgent care in a welcoming space where you're treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.

You don't have to wait. You don't have to explain yourself. You just have to walk in.



Find a mental health urgent care location near you!

CNSHealthcare.org | 800-615-0411 | @CNSMichigan

Conservatives Interfering with the College Mission to Make Everyone Gay

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



My teenage son has been watching the show “Ted” lately. A couple of years ago I watched the first “Ted” movie with him at his request. It was, um, not to my taste. I’m not a huge fan of blue humor, especially when it comes from a sentient teddy bear.

He showed me a clip of the family sitting around the table. Gayness comes up as a subject and the mother character chimes in that the father character always says, “College makes you gay.” My son thought this was very funny. And it honestly was.

It reminded me of one of my favorite movies, “But I’m a Cheerleader,” where the head of a conversion therapy camp, played by Cathy Moriarty, tells the parents of Megan (Natasha Lyonne), a teenage cheerleader suspected of being gay, “You almost lost her to college.”

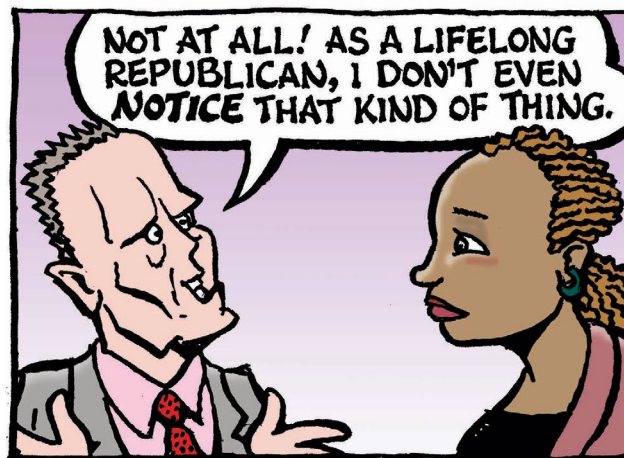
That movie, with the premise that conversion therapy is stupid and abusive, came out in 1999. Here we are in 2026 and conservatives are still claiming that it’s possible for LGBTQ+ people, especially kids, to “pray the gay away.” And the extremist U.S. Supreme Court is siding with the bigots.

So does college make people gay? No, of course not. But

Here we are in 2026 and conservatives are still claiming that it’s possible for LGBTQ+ people, especially kids, to ‘pray the gay away.’ And the extremist U.S. Supreme Court is siding with the bigots.

it’s funny to joke about because there are people who actually believe this. Right-wing extremists have been sounding the alarm about higher education for decades, claiming that colleges and universities are too liberal, putting funny ideas in the heads of young people about equality and social justice.

This has accelerated under the Trump administration as exceedingly extremist ideas are being taken mainstream. Because education is a threat to extremist ideology. The more educated a person is, the harder it is to convince them that transgender people are a threat, that racism doesn’t exist, that



Donald Trump is a good president or that vaccines are bad and measles is good, actually.

So it’s not surprising that conservative extremists are going all out to make college less “woke,” going to great lengths to stifle free speech. And, yes, these are the same conservatives who threw a fit over free speech when students protested right-wing extremists holding events on their campuses. Remember when Elon Musk bought Twitter to make it a bastion of free speech? And now it’s a Nazi free-for-all? That’s the kind of free speech they like.

Recently, two different institutions of higher education made news for shutting down free speech, specifically free speech about LGBTQ+ ideas.

The first school is Texas Tech University, which “has implemented a sweeping new policy that blocks discussions of LGBTQ+ issues in classrooms and student assignments,” according to The Advocate.

“Instruction must not endorse fluid gender identity as an empirical biological reality that supersedes the two-sex requirement,” a memo detailing the new policy reads. “Nor may programs compel students to personally affirm gender ideology.”

In other words, teachers need to treat transgender people like UFOs, as if there’s no hard evidence confirming their existence and everyone who believes in them is part of the lunatic fringe.

Now, you might be asking yourself, “This school’s chancellor sounds like some sort of former Republican state senator who led the state’s ban on diversity, equity and

inclusion in higher education or something.”

And you would be right. That is exactly who he is. Living his dream.

Then there’s Pensacola State College preventing student journalists from publishing LGBTQ-related stories “because their LGBTQ+ content could violate Florida’s Stop WOKE Act.”

The stories in question were “a profile of a local drag queen, a piece on a queer bookstore, and a story about a community poetry club,” reports journalist Erin Reed. Downright shocking subject matter.

“The move to censor students from writing about LGBTQ+ people breaks with both recent and longstanding precedent, and the cited justification doesn’t even hold up,” Reed writes. “Florida’s Stop WOKE Act, signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2022, prohibits public colleges from funding ‘advocacy’ for diversity, equity and inclusion and establishes a sort of Don’t Say Gay protocol that applies to colleges. But a federal judge blocked the law’s provisions, calling them ‘positively dystopian’ [and the] 11th Circuit affirmed that injunction in 2024, describing the law as ‘the latest attempt to control speech by recharacterizing it as conduct’ and calling viewpoint-based restrictions ‘the greatest First Amendment sin.’ The law remains enjoined to this day; PSC is censoring students to comply with a law it is not even legally required to follow.”

In other words, the Stop WOKE Act isn’t even legally enforceable. Which means the stated reason for the censorship is either a lie or comes from a person who doesn’t understand the law.

So, who knows? Maybe it’s part of the ongoing attack on higher education, or maybe it’s all just some silly li’l old misunderstanding.

Trans House Candidate Joanna Whaley Faces Deadname Attack From Fellow Democrat

.....

Joanna Whaley, a trans woman running for Michigan’s 2nd House District in the Downriver area, is fighting to stay on the August primary ballot after primary opponent Frank Liberati filed a complaint with the Wayne County Clerk’s office alleging she violated state election law by not listing her deadname on candidate paperwork.

Liberati, a former state representative, cited a 2023 name change petition that had lapsed — but Whaley later completed her legal name change through court proceedings, with records sealed for her safety. Michigan law also provides a “common law name” exception; Whaley has used her name for roughly five years.

Michigan Democratic Party Chair Curtis Hertel told Michigan Advance the party is “concerned by the developments in this race,” while the Michigan Legislative LGBTQ+ Caucus denounced the complaint as “meritless” and an attempt to “stoke the flames of transphobia for personal political gain.”

Whaley, a Lincoln Park clergy member, said she intends to see the fight



Frank Liberati (left) and Joanna Whaley. Photos: Wikipedia, Courtesy

through. “My hope for future trans candidates is that we’ve gotten bloody enough to bust the hole in the wall that they can just walk through it,” she said. If elected, she would be among the first trans state legislators in Michigan.

Don’t miss our upcoming feature on Whaley’s groundbreaking campaign, coming up in our Ferndale Pride issue on May 21.

Affirmations Hosts Community Conversation

.....

Affirmations, Ferndale’s LGBTQ+ community center, is hosting a community conversation, “Come Home,” from 7 to 9 p.m. May 15. The event centers Black queer and trans people, queer and trans people of color, sex workers, and disabled and chronically ill community members.

Executive Director Tracy Hall acknowledged that not everyone has always experienced Affirmations as the safe, inclusive space it strives to be. “This circle invites those most impacted by isolation and marginalization to share what they need and to help shape together what an affirming future looks like for all of us,” Hall told BTL.

Food and childcare will be provided. Licensed therapists and emotional support staff will be present throughout. The event is free and open to all.

Federal Judge Blocks FTC Probes Into Trans Healthcare

.....

A federal judge has dealt a pair of legal setbacks to the Trump administration, blocking Federal Trade Commission investigations into the World Professional Association for Transgender Health

and the Endocrine Society — the groups behind the clinical standards at the center of a federal pressure campaign that led more than 40 hospital systems nationwide, including Michigan Medicine and Corewell Health, to drop gender-affirming care for minors overnight.

U.S. District Court Judge James Boasberg granted preliminary injunctions to both groups May 8, citing “extensive evidence of animus” and “wafer-thin justifications” from the administration.

Equality Michigan called it a clear win. “Our right to make private medical decisions should not be interfered with by politicians like Trump,” the organization said on social media.

The rulings are preliminary, and whether Michigan’s major medical systems will read the shifting legal landscape as reason to restore access to puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormones for patients under 19 remains to be seen.

A Trans Soul Legend Gets Her Flowers

.....

Before she vanished from public life for decades, Jackie Shane was outperforming Etta James and Little Richard. The new documentary “Any Other Way: The Jackie Shane Story” reclaims the Black trans soul singer’s legacy using rotoscope animation and Shane’s own recorded voice to tell her story on her own terms. The film, executive produced by Elliot Page, is streaming now on Amazon Prime Video.

Muna Drops New Album

.....

Muna’s fourth album, “Dancing On The Wall,” dropped May 8 — the beloved queer indie pop trio’s first release since their acclaimed 2022 self-titled record. The Los Angeles band has built a fiercely devoted queer following through unflinching lyrics about same-sex desire, identity and emotional mess, delivered in euphoric pop packages that feel equally at home in a queer club or a good cry. Streaming everywhere.

Beanie Baby on the Way

.....

Actress and children’s book author Beanie Feldstein and wife Bonnie-Chance Roberts are expecting their first child, the couple announced May 9 on Instagram with the caption “Limited Edition Scouse Beanie Baby coming soon!!” The queer celebrity world lost its collective mind in the best way, with out actor Ben Platt posting in a comment under the announcement, “The universe is healing.”

Beanie Feldstein. Photo: Instagram/@beaniefeldstein





Presented by



UNSHAKEN

ROOTED IN PRIDE. LEADING WITH LOVE.

B

Family Activities



Saturday

JUNE 6TH

1:00-5:00 P.M.

Sunday

JUNE 7TH

1:00-5:00 P.M.

Join other families as they participate in face painting, arts and crafts, plus much more!

SATURDAY JUNE 6TH

Time

1:00 pm

1:00 – 6:00 pm

1:00 – 8:00 pm

1:00 – 8:00 pm

1:00 – 8:30 pm

1:00 – 9:00 pm

8:00 pm

9:00 pm



PA

Presented by



Be a part of our team,
sign up to be a volunteer.

motorcitypride.org

E 6

Activity

Festival Opens
Family Area
Vendor and Sponsor Booths
History Area
Beverage and Food Sales
Three Stages of Entertainment
Gates Close (No Readmission)
Festival Closes

SUNDAY JUNE 7

Time

Noon
12:30 pm
12:30 – 6:30 pm
12:30 – 6:00 pm
12:30 – 6:00 pm
12:30 – 7:00 pm
1:00 – 5:00 pm
6:00 pm
7:00 pm

Activity

Parade Step off
Festival Opens
Beverage and Food Sales
Vendor and Sponsor Booths
History Area
Three Stages of Entertainment
Family Area
Gates Close (No Readmission)
Festival Closes

PARADE



Sunday, June 7

Starts
at Noon

Starts at the corner
of Fort and Griswald



Lesbian Social attendees. Courtesy photo

The Underground Always Finds a Way

Michigan's queer bars and social clubs have been adapting to survive for a century — and they're not done yet

BY SAMUEL SCHWINDT

Across the country, headlines have been mourning the death of the gay bar. In Michigan, the story looks different.

It's true queer spaces all over the country are encountering hurdles in their success. I don't think it's at a "heartbreaking pace," as Mathew Rodriguez recently wrote for *Them*. Rodriguez pointed to declining service industry sales, falling foot traffic and young people going out less. Those trends are real — over the past two years, more than

12% of nightclub partners in the U.S. have permanently closed, and a 2025 survey found that 61% of 18- to 30-year-olds reported going out less frequently than the year before, with rising costs cited as the leading driver.

But recent data shows Gen Z is spending more on going out overall, and Eventbrite has tracked a 92% increase in sober-curious gatherings, events that blend music, wellness and community in ways traditional bars never did. This generation isn't abandoning social life — it's reimagining it, gravitating toward niche, alternative experiences over mega

clubs. So what, in all of this, is sadly trendy to say about our changing queer nightlife and what is actually true?

The story worth telling is evolution, not loss, with an eye toward preserving what the past built. Entire underground worlds, formed in resistance to political attacks and economic shortcomings, shaped how we gathered then and how we gather today. I'm writing to document what's still alive, not to eulogize what's closed.

Michigan, it turns out, is one of the strongest examples of this.

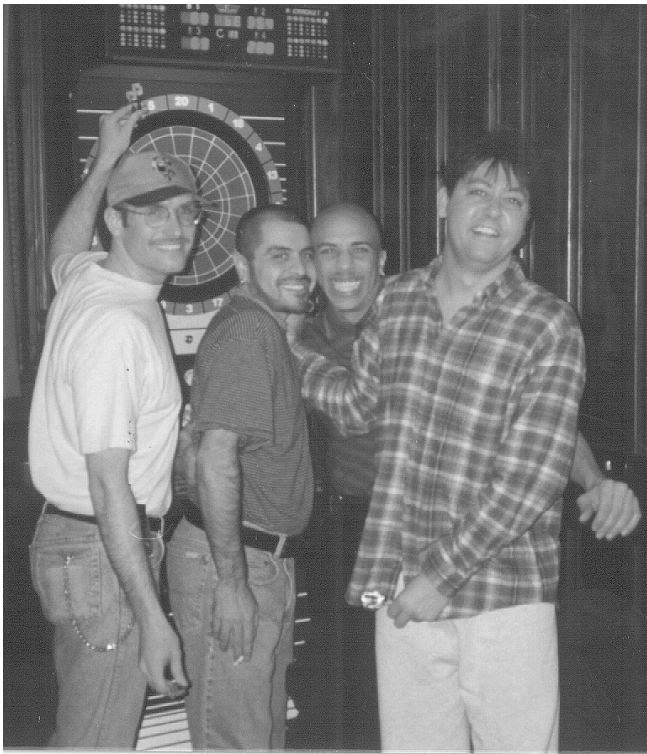
For a century, all aspects of queer life impacted nightlife in Michigan. We can go back as far as Ruth Ellis, one of the oldest out lesbians in history, who moved to Detroit in 1937. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas visited Ann Arbor in 1936 to spread a gospel of artistic, queer freedom. The Ballroom scene of Detroit survived HIV/AIDS and is rumbling underground still today. And long before any of that was visible, there were speakeasies — bars you'd find only if someone trusted you enough to point the way.

The Woodward Bar & Grill, which opened

in 1954 on Woodward Avenue, embodied what many of these spaces would become: a lunch spot for the GM workforce by day, a discreet haven for gay and queer Detroiters by night. Over the decades it became one of the most prominent Black LGBTQ+ spaces in the city, before a three-alarm fire in 2022 destroyed it — a loss still felt in the community. Two bars that opened in its wake are still standing. Gigi's, the oldest gay-owned bar in Detroit, opened in 1973, four years after Stonewall, and has been home ever since to the Miss Gigi's pageant, the longest-running gay bar drag title in the country. Menjo's followed a year later in the Palmer Park neighborhood — reportedly the first club in Detroit where DJs mixed records live — and still displays the original 1976 disco ball that a teenage Madonna once danced under.

Art Smith, founder of an astounding archive of gay bar history, lives this philosophy through Gaybarchives, which challenges mainstream mourning and embraces the kind of nostalgia I'm searching for. The Facebook group has over 30,000 members and millions of engagements over the past month, where users share and comment their memories. Smith also gathers and recreates iconic memorabilia, designs and images of closed spaces throughout the country. "It's kind of like when you watch those old family movies at home and you think, Oh, that was such a great time with grandma and uncle Jay, and whoever," he told BTL. "It just brings back so many memories."

While posts on the page can range from sadness to disappointment, some members embrace gratitude. Chris Stommell posted a memory of the Flamingo bar in Pontiac in the '90s, reflecting on a poet he met and her impact on him. "We'd talk for hours, sharing stories of our then difficult efforts to find a future we could each inhabit in a rough world," he wrote. In an interview with BTL, Stommell reflected further on that era compared to today. "Until the late '90s, the typical gay bar existed hidden in plain



Patrons at Adam's Apple in the early '90s. Photo: BTL archives

"We are growing and changing as the community does. It's not mournful, it's that our world is changing, and we need to continue to change with it."

— Bobby Johnson, owner of The Apartment Lounge

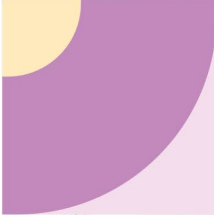
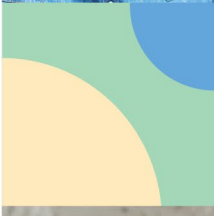
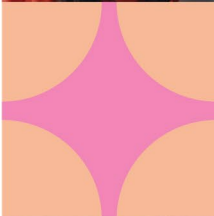
sight — in an industrial park, an abandoned strip mall, the edge of town," he said. "They had discreet or no signs, metal doors with doormen who made sure you were gay before they let you in."

This discreet camaraderie spread from Saugatuck to Grand Rapids to Detroit and beyond in the '80s and '90s. Bobby Johnson, previous owner of Club 67 in the '90s and current owner of The Apartment Lounge in Grand Rapids, remarked on his past in the gay service industry and the current state of gay nightlife. Club 67 was the local "discotheque," Johnson told BTL. "It was the place everyone went to party, we were freaking wall to wall," he said.

Like Stommell, Johnson worked at and visited spaces hidden in plain sight. "There were a million abandoned buildings, and we traveled together in packs, because it was the

See **Underground**, page 17

We're Hiring Clinicians



JOIN OUR TEAM

Seeking licensed clinicians who are passionate about healing, equity, and community impact.

Join a team that honors lived experience, embodiment, and inclusive care. Your expertise belongs here.



Behavioral Health & Addiction Services

Ph: 248-907-0247

Fax: 844-913-1883

Email: Mark@Mark-McMillan.com

800 Hilton Street, Suite One
Ferndale, MI 48220

Mark McMillan,
LMSW, CAADC
(pronouns he/him)



APPLY TODAY

[Mark-McMillan.com](https://www.Mark-McMillan.com)

Where Are the Tears for Ava Cordero?

How the press silenced a trans woman who tried to stop Jeffrey Epstein

BY ANNI ARBOUR

Transgender people have never been treated well by the mainstream media. Usually, whenever one in our community makes it into the news cycle, it is in a negative context. Certainly, whenever they are suspected of a major crime. More often, though, they are the victim. And if so, they are soon forgotten.

The ongoing drip, drip, drip of revelations from the heavily redacted Epstein files has revived memories of Ava Cordero, a young trans woman who was one of Jeffrey Epstein's earliest accusers.

In October 2007, Cordero filed a lawsuit against Epstein for sexually abusing her when she was only 16 years old, circa 2000. That month, the New York Post ran two articles regarding this suit — and instead of presenting Cordero's claims with the usual respect and anonymity shown to potential sexual abuse victims, the Post homed in on her transgender identity. Their reporters misgendered her, deadnamed her and quoted the accusations of Epstein's lawyer without dispute.

The Oct. 23, 2007, article bearing the salacious title “GENDER-BEND SHOCKER: Kinky-Sex Suit Gal Is a Man” cherry-picked snippets of immature postings Cordero had made on her Myspace page and used them as fodder for their presentation of her as a “promiscuous slut.” Epstein's attorney was quoted as saying he was “girding for more craziness with people trying to go after his client's money” and that “it wouldn't surprise me if the next claim was from the Loch Ness monster.”

The follow-up article the next day dug up a previous statutory



Ava Cordero, New York Post story. Widely distributed photos

rape claim Cordero had brought against another man named Glen Gentile in 2002. Snarkily titled “(S)HE HAS A HISTORY: Bogus Sex Suit,” it stated: “The transsexual [sic] who says she was pressured into an affair with billionaire Jeffrey Epstein when she was 16 once filed a similar — and bogus — claim against another older man.”

Other media outlets piled on and cast aspersions on Cordero's claims simply because of her gender. One such piece appeared in New York magazine with the title “Maximilia Cordero Is a Dude.” And even the reputedly objective Associated Press left unchallenged Epstein's lawyer's statement claiming, “The girl has admitted she is insane, but she can read a newspaper and recognize the word ‘rich.’”

Cordero's story once again came to light with the revelations in the Epstein files. Even so, she has been treated as a minor footnote to his long predatory legacy, with few bothering to look into her life



“[Cordero] has been treated as a minor footnote to Epstein's long predatory legacy, with few bothering to look into her life either before or since she took him to court.”

either before or since she took Epstein to court.

Cordero was born in Brooklyn on Nov. 15, 1983, and as the eldest child in a Hispanic family, she was named after her father. Around age 12, she began wearing girls' clothes and chose the name “Avarelle.” She later went by Ava Cordero. Her coming out led to estrangement from her biological family, and she later claimed to have been raised in foster homes.

On her Myspace page, Cordero wrote about her aspiration to be

a fashion model — a desire that proved to be the lure used by what court records described as “an acquaintance named Sherrie, an older woman in her 40s,” who “told the plaintiff that she had a ‘super wealthy’ friend who could help plaintiff develop a modeling career.”

Cordero brought her own modeling portfolio to show Jeffrey Epstein, who dangled the prospect of modeling for Victoria's Secret to the teenager. He conducted the meeting wrapped in a bathrobe

and at its conclusion asked Cordero for a massage, presumably in exchange for the \$300 he usually paid other teenage girls. Poor and naïve, she agreed.

The disturbing details of Epstein's sexual assaults on the young aspiring model can be found all over the internet, reprinted ad nauseam for the smut-loving public. Epstein pursued Cordero for more than a year and even tried to get her to fly to Thailand with him to recruit “ladyboys” for his nefarious purposes.

Out-lawyered and publicly humiliated, Cordero eventually settled out of court with Epstein for a paltry \$28,000 on the condition she sign a nondisclosure agreement. The impact all this had upon her was unquantifiable.

In 2002, Cordero met William Unroch, a sleazy lawyer-cum-pornographer who represented her in her statutory rape lawsuit against Gentile. A 2006 New York Daily News article noted that despite their 30-year age difference, Unroch and Cordero were a couple and lived together. He also took on her case against Epstein, and after his botched handling of that lawsuit, they sued the New York Post for defamation. During an argument over money, Cordero pulled a knife on Unroch. He called the police, and she spent a few days in Rikers Island jail. Her new attorney lost the case to the Post on a technicality in 2008. Then in 2014, Cordero was arrested for burglary and spent seven months in prison.

A March 2, 2017, article in the New York Daily News reported that police came upon

See *Trans Lucent*, page 20



Drag show at Rubaiyat in Ann Arbor featuring Sofonda Peter (center). Photo: Roger LeLievre, GayBarchives Facebook

◀ Underground

Continued from page 15

way to be safe,” he said of the bars tucked into unexpected venues. Johnson tends to look forward rather than back. “We are growing and changing as the community does. It’s not mournful, it’s that our world is changing, and we need to continue to change with it,” he said.

Secret celebrations and sneaky queer joy are our history, and of course we don’t need to be as hidden in plain sight as we did in the past, but there are still necessary adaptations. Some spaces are changing their branding and menus of drinks and events alike in accordance with evolving perspectives in the community. Uplift in Ann Arbor has gone furthest with this rethinking. The space identifies as a queer bar rather than gay, a deliberate choice co-owner Saharsh Hajela said is rooted in the belief that inclusion begins with language.

“I don’t think spaces that are labeled as gay are intentionally exclusionary,” he told BTL, but letting people know from the start that there’s no expectation of who they should be or how they should express themselves changes who walks through the door. That expansiveness extends to the bar menu, too. Uplift

stocks extensive nonalcoholic options, following a broader shift in how customers, especially younger ones, want to socialize. “We live in a day and age in which labels are becoming less important,” Hajela said. “The spectrum of how you view yourself and how you view others is so broad, and that’s been very freeing for everybody.”

The Apartment Lounge has followed suit, and Johnson made some jokes about how far things have come. “Back in the day, if you came in and said, hey, I’m looking for something nonalcoholic, we’d be like ‘soda.’ But now we have 10 nonalcoholic cocktails,” he said, nodding to the changing dynamics of club culture with more youthful visitors.

Fixed addresses aren’t the only game in town. Queer social clubs are gathering all over Michigan, embracing a nomadic existence that constantly brings in new people to the scene.

Lesbian Social Detroit is one of the clearest examples. Founded in 2017 by Chelcea Stowers, a photographer who noticed a lack of quality lesbian nightlife events in the city, the group started as a pop-up party with hopes of creating a safe space downtown. It now hosts regular events at some of Detroit’s most visible venues, including a residency at the Godfrey Hotel’s IO Rooftop Lounge

in Corktown, and celebrated its eighth anniversary in November 2025 at ORA Detroit.

The gatherings range from concert after-parties to booth nights at the bar Bloom to a Pisces celebration at Godfrey’s last March. Stowers told BTL that keeping the format flexible has been central to the group’s staying power. “I think keeping it limited to once or twice a month at different venues keeps it fresh,” she said.

Stowers described Lesbian Social Detroit as a “disruptor” to the typical nightlife scene and wants her events to be part of an overarching “resurgence” of Detroit. “I love how my events have brought diversity to the scene because typically things are separated,” she said. They are showing venues there’s a “market for our community; we come out and have a great time, with no incidents. So I think it’s a win for everyone.”

What Stowers is building isn’t so different from what Johnson built in Grand Rapids, or what the Flamingo bar offered Stommell in Pontiac — the thread runs all the way back to the speakeasy doorman checking credentials in an abandoned strip mall. The venue changes. The need doesn’t. And even after the lights go out, the queer joy remains.

COMMUNITY 
PRIDE

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS, MI

WEEK
MAY 31–JUNE 6

A special week focusing on and celebrating the LGBTQIA+ Community with social gatherings, outdoor activities, educational presentations and live entertainment.

- **5/31: PRIDE Week Tea Dance** at The Dunes Resort
- **6/2: PRIDE Paddle Boat Dance Cruises** on Lake Michigan
- **6/3 & 6/4: PRIDE Special Guest Speakers/Presentations**
- **6/5: PRIDE Jazz for Justice Block Party**
- **6/6: PRIDE 2 Mile Color Run/Walk**
- **6/6: PRIDE Parade & PRIDE in the Park Celebration** Featuring Chicago bands, *Hello Weekend & Sixteen Candles*
- **SO MUCH MORE!**

Sat, June 6
PRIDE in The Park
Featuring
Sixteen Candles
& *Hello Weekend!*

Scan this code for all the details and join us in Saugatuck-Douglas to **SHOW YOUR PRIDE!**



www.communitypridemi.com

Uniquely
You



Personal style is never
one note.

Curated bands that
reflect every side
of you. Elevated,
expressive, and
entirely your own.

Scan the code to shop
stackable bands.



LEWIS JEWELERS
SINCE 1921 "Your Diamond Store"

300 S Maple Rd., Ann Arbor
734.994.5111 | LewisJewelers.com



Mary Magdalene Towers. Photo: Instagram/@marymagdalenedrag

She Found Drag in Fifth Grade. Now Mary Magdalene Towers Is Ready for Her Close-Up.

For the 17-year-old Ann Arbor student, eyebrows, faith and false lashes are all part of becoming herself

BY KELLI DUNHAM

At a recent event at North Star Lounge, 17-year-old Ann Arbor drag performer Mary Magdalene Towers faced the crowd: "I love drag, and it's something I want to do for the rest of my life. I want to keep dancing until I'm dead," she said.

Cue "The Dead Dance" by Lady Gaga. And, well, a lot of dancing.

Most of her peers were still recovering from the SATs they had taken just 48 hours before the event.

Towers, however, had put on false lashes and stepped into a pair of fabulous high heels for her first real bar show. It's a particular kind of double life: Scantron by day, stage lights by night.

"I first discovered drag in fifth grade when Covid hit," Towers told BTL. "I was stuck at home with my mom. We ran out of stuff to watch really fast. We discovered 'RuPaul's Drag Race,' and I was like, holy crap, this is amazing and wonderful. I love this!"

At the time, though, she didn't see herself in it. "I didn't realize women

can do drag too," she said. "That didn't click until like two or three years ago." Once it did, the leap felt less like a decision and more like a recognition. "I've always been that kid putting on a fancy dress, dancing around the living room, singing show tunes. So it was kind of a natural combination."

The drag name Mary Magdalene Towers reflects that same instinct to remix a familiar symbol into something more personal. "I think Mary Magdalene is just an interesting historical figure," she said. "She's kind of — I guess the right word is

underrated? People kind of glaze over her existence, but she was really cool.”

In the New Testament, Mary Magdalene is one of Jesus’ most devoted followers and, in the Gospel of John, the first witness to the resurrection. She’s been widely mischaracterized for centuries — conflated without scriptural basis with a “sinful woman” in another gospel — and the Catholic Church didn’t officially correct the record until 1969. It’s a story about a significant figure whose narrative was rewritten by other people’s perceptions, which, in the context of Towers’ drag career, doesn’t feel like a coincidence.

The name also hints at one of the tensions that runs through Towers’ work: a blend of queerness and faith that doesn’t need to be resolved. Scroll through her social media and you’ll see that tension playing out in real time, as commenters debate theology, gender, aesthetics and eyebrows with equal intensity. It’s a crash course in what it means to exist squarely in the frame of other people’s perceptions — something many adult performers spend years learning to navigate.

And while the internet may have opinions, Towers has momentum. Her performance resume has been a delightful patchwork.

“I guess my first actual performance was a talent show at the end of summer camp,” she said. “I said, ‘Screw it. We’re all from a really liberal town. I’ll be fine. I’m not gonna get, like, stabbed.’”

That instinct proved correct. A coffee shop show in Ypsilanti followed — one other performer, half an hour, total.

Then there was a moment at a church

function. “My church joins in a youth retreat each November at Great Wolf Lodge in Traverse City,” Towers said. “So it’s me and my friends and some primarily Lutheran kids from around Michigan, just chilling, doing the Jesus thing — and there was a talent show. I thought, ‘Yeah, why not?’ I put on my makeup and a pair of high heels, and I danced. It was kind of weird, but people clapped and no one threw tomatoes. A few friends were maybe confused, but overall they were supportive.”

That willingness to say “why not” is part of what defines Towers’ approach. There’s no illusion of arriving fully formed. “I’m still a kid technically, so I don’t have much experience,” she said, “in drag or really in life. So I’ve been spending hours in my basement trying to sew costumes. Crying, failing, but trying.”

Towers’ DIY ethic extends to every part of her process. Getting into drag takes about an hour, starting with what she describes as a necessary first step: “You panic a little bit first.” Then comes the technical work — foundation, contour, eyes, wig, shoes — along with

one persistent nemesis. “Eyebrows,” she said. “I cannot master them for the life of me. I’ve watched like 20 YouTube videos. Nothing’s working.”

Still, progress is visible. “The eye

“I’ve always been that kid putting on a fancy dress, dancing around the living room, singing show tunes. So it was kind of a natural combination.”

— Mary Magdalene Towers

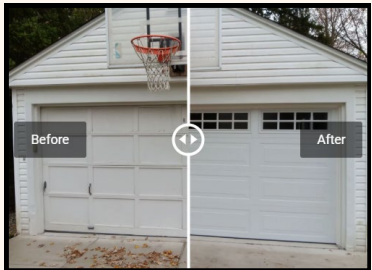
makeup has evolved,” she said. “We have improved.” So has her sewing, thanks in part to her work as the student head of costumes for her high school’s production of “Chicago.”

Towers’ parents are supportive, if occasionally bemused. “I think they think it’s a little weird, but they’ll take me to drag shows,” she said — and some of those shows are in Chicago, which is

See **Teen Drag Queen**, page 22

70 YEARS OF OPENING DOORS FOR MICHIGAN HOMES

Trusted Since 1956
Family Owned. Community-Rooted



Transform your curb appeal with Michigan's most trusted garage door experts.

Celebrating 70 Years of Quality, Craftsmanship & Service

Why Homeowners Choose Jan Door:

- Expert installation, repair & maintenance
- Fast, reliable service from trained technicians
- Premium styles to elevate curb appeal
- Honest pricing & long standing local reputation

\$110 RESIDENTIAL GARAGE DOOR TUNE-UP
Limited-Time 70th Anniversary Offer
Call to schedule. 313.581.7300

NOW HIRING GARAGE DOOR TECHNICIANS
Grow with a company built on 70 years of trust.



Don Chisholm, REALTOR®
(248) 425-4366
DChisholm@RealEstateOne.com
www.DonChisholmRealtor.com



Your Personal Advocate



- Friendly, Professional Service
- Empowering You Through Education
- Serving the Woodward Corridor and Beyond!

Real Estate One
26236 Woodward Ave.
Royal Oak, MI 48067



Michigan's Largest Real Estate Company

G	U	L	L	S	A	B	E	R	C	R	O	P
O	P	A	L	A	L	A	M	O	H	E	N	S
E	S	S	O	G	E	T	A	L	O	A	D	O
T	H	E	Y	R	E	C	H	I	L	D	R	E
H	O	R	D	E	L	E	I	F	D	A		
E	T	S		T	W	I	T		E	L	I	A
			A	R	A	M	A	I	C	I	N	G
		O	F	G	O	D	A	N	D	H	A	V
K	N	E	E		E	N	D	L	I	N	E	
I	P	A	S	S		Y	E	S	I		E	D
M	A	S		A	S	I				T	I	M
	R	I	G	H	T	T	O	A	F	A	M	I
M	O	B	I	L	E	H	O	M	E		O	N
A	L	L	S		L	A	Z	E	D		N	E
B	E	E	T		E	D	E	N	S		A	M

Way to Go, Leo
Puzzle can be found on page 21

BTL merch is here!



pridesource.com/merch

THE FINEST IN ADULT ENTERTAINMENT AT THE BEST PRICES!

SALE \$5.95
SHADE
Starring: David D'Amico, Markie, Nicholas D'Ag, Cristophe Gibbani, Christian Nigro, Laurent Leger

SALE \$5.95
HOUSE PARTY SANGBANG
Starring: David D'Amico, Markie, Nicholas D'Ag, Cristophe Gibbani, Christian Nigro, Laurent Leger

SALE \$9.99
D&W
Starring: David D'Amico, Markie, Nicholas D'Ag, Cristophe Gibbani, Christian Nigro, Laurent Leger

SALE \$14.95
PRIVATE MOMENTS
Starring: David D'Amico, Markie, Nicholas D'Ag, Cristophe Gibbani, Christian Nigro, Laurent Leger

Rush - Jungle Juice - Maximum Impact - Swiss Navy - Amsterdam - ID Glide - COLT- Butterfly Kiss Pink- The Womanizer

UPTOWN BOOKSTORES ADULT VIDEO
2 LOCATIONS
WWW.UPTOWNADULT.COM

16541 Woodward Ave.
at McNichols next to "Deja Vu"
Highland Park
313.869.9477

16401 W. 8 Mile
Between Greenfield & Southfield
Detroit
313.836.0647

Hours:
Mon-Sat 10am - 9pm
Sun 12 - 6pm

Trans Lucent

Continued from page 16

the smashed glass door of a Manhattan Victoria's Secret store and found Cordero in the act of "stocking up on \$1,000 of pushup bras, G-strings, thongs and makeup," according to the paper. It seemed an ironic choice of theft target, given that Epstein had long served as a financial manager and confidant to Victoria's Secret founder Les Wexner, giving him deep ties to the brand that had once been dangled as bait before her. Based on her record, it's likely Cordero once again faced prison time.

Cordero's life has followed a downward spiral ever since she first encountered Jeffrey Epstein. Other men abused and exploited her. She suffered the effects of life on the street. The courts never provided her with justice, and the mainstream media tossed aside any sympathetic journalistic restraint and joined in debasing her.

Even those in the #MeToo movement forgot about Cordero as they championed other Epstein victims who stepped forward and publicly testified about their own abuse. We have become accustomed to seeing them testify tearfully before Congress and news cameras, appearing alongside their high-profile attorneys. And while those victims are unquestionably entitled to the millions of dollars in restitution they are

receiving from the Epstein estate and others complicit in his crimes, Cordero received nothing beyond the \$28,000 she settled for.

So, where are the tears for Ava Cordero?

It took time, but I found her. She is living in a facility that provides housing for people experiencing homelessness who are living with HIV or struggling with addiction. I called the shelter and spoke with the security desk, told them I was a journalist and convinced them to let me speak with her. They put me through to her phone.

A soft feminine voice answered, and I introduced myself. I started to tell her that I wanted only to reassure her she had not been forgotten, not to discuss the Epstein case, which had brought her so much grief. But she stopped me before I could finish.

"I'm so sorry, but I can't." And with that she hung up.

It was a frustrating conclusion to a well-intentioned quest, but I understand her reluctance to face scrutiny. She had suffered so much from past media attention, and even though I told her I was a trans journalist, she had no reason to believe I wouldn't exploit her, too.

Take comfort in the fact that Ava Cordero is still among us — a resilient example of how American society, and mainstream media in particular, abuses, misuses and ultimately discards its most marginalized people. Don't expect any tears for Ava Cordero, but don't forget her.



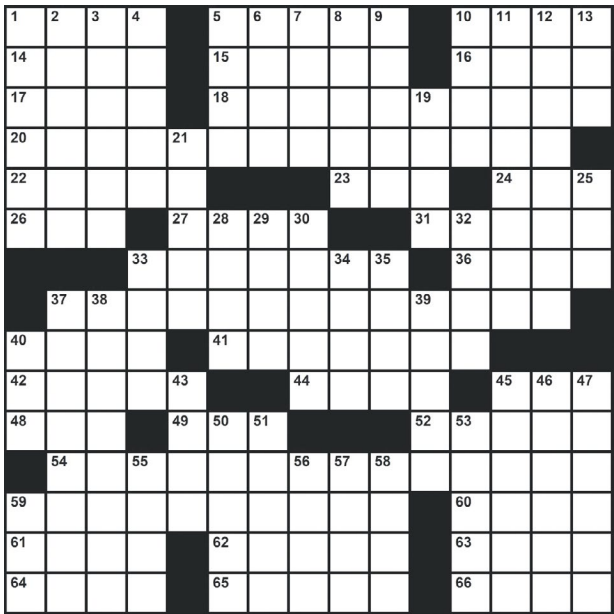
- Transfer your prescriptions today
- Specializing in providing world class HIV pharmaceutical care
- Free HIV Testing
- Pickup free at home HIV testing kits
- Free Syphilis testing
- Blister Packaging Available
- Free Delivery!



Toll-Free Available 24 Hours/Day: **1-800-381-7518**
www.crownpharmacy.com



24401 Plymouth Rd, Redford, MI 48239
313-532-DRUG (3784)
CrownPharmacy1@aol.com
Hours: M-F 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Closed Weekends and Holidays



Way to Go, Leo

Across

- 1 Sucker
- 5 It may stick out in front of a cavalryman
- 10 Jockey's prod
- 14 Mineral formed from silica
- 15 You must remember this
- 16 Layers in the barnyard

- 17 Old U.S. gas brand
- 18 Ogle
- 20 Start of what Pope Leo said about the LGBTQ+ community
- 22 Nomadic mob
- 23 Oahu garland
- 24 AZT approver
- 26 Saucer pilots
- 27 British bozo
- 31 Disney's middle name
- 33 Biblical tongue
- 36 "Cunt" author Muscio
- 37 More of the quote
- 40 Cap kind

- 41 Playing field boundary
- 42 Transvestite boast?
- 44 "___ Can" (Sammy Davis Jr. book)
- 45 Summer hrs. in NY
- 48 Rainey and Kettle
- 49 "It's ___ suspected"
- 52 One with an hourglass figure
- 54 End of the quote
- 59 House in Harper Lee's home state of Alabama?
- 60 Burden or responsibility
- 61 Start of a Shakespearean title
- 62 Took it easy
- 63 Cry at the doctor's office
- 64 Borscht veggie
- 65 Shangri-la and Xanadu
- 66 Iowa State city

Down

- 1 "Faust" author
- 2 Outcome
- 3 Sci-fi weaponry
- 4 Andrew ___ Webber
- 5 Profoundly wise
- 6 Trump portrayer Baldwin
- 7 A dirty person may draw one
- 8 Desktop communication
- 9 Bea Arthur's "Maude" costar Esther
- 10 Burn a bit
- 11 Change the meaning of
- 12 Iroquoian language
- 13 Pressure meas.
- 19 Garfield's pal
- 21 Nostalgic fashion trend
- 25 Nutty ___ fruitcake
- 28 Go in only partway, at the beach

- 29 Bowie married her
- 30 Jessica of "Fried Green Tomatoes"
- 32 In person
- 33 Many a moon
- 34 "Spamalot" writer Eric
- 35 Greek X's
- 37 Conditionally out
- 38 Not totally out of the question
- 39 "West Side Story" girl
- 40 Cattrall of "Sex and the City"
- 43 Canadian comedian Mort
- 45 "8 Mile" rapper
- 46 With all the bells and whistles
- 47 No-tell motel meetings
- 50 Inscribed column
- 51 Billie Holiday's "___ to Be You"
- 53 "___ roll!"
- 55 Essential meaning
- 56 Slimy stuff
- 57 Sherman Hemsley religious sitcom
- 58 G-men and T-men
- 59 Queen in "Romeo and Juliet"

See p. 19 for answers

Ruth Ellis Clairmount Health and Wellness

313-484-5888

Primary Care

- All ages welcome
- Sick visits
- Physicals
- Accept most insurances
- Management of chronic conditions



Sexual Health

- Comprehensive STI testing and treatment
- Contraception
- Partner services
- Poly and sex positive



HIV Prevention and Treatment

- Oral and injectable PrEP for HIV prevention
- HIV treatment and monitoring



Gender Affirming Care

- Gender affirming hormones
- Gender inclusive PAP/GYN services
- Surgical referrals



HENRY FORD HEALTH
Ruth Ellis Center

Healthcare You Can Take PRIDE In



CORKTOWN
HEALTH

1726 Howard Street, Detroit, MI 48216

LGBTQ+ Focused Primary Care
Oral Health/Dental Care
Behavioral Health
Comprehensive HIV Services
HIV Testing & PrEP
Insurance Navigation
STI Testing & Treatment
Gender Affirming Care

Now Open in Hazel Park!

24310 John R Road
Hazel Park, MI 48030

call us at 313-832-3300
and learn more at
corktownhealth.org



Delivering Amazing Quality
since 1892.

800-862-8667 | www.nortonsflowers.com
We Deliver the **WOW!**



LOCATIONS IN YPSILANTI & ANN ARBOR

Teen Drag Queen

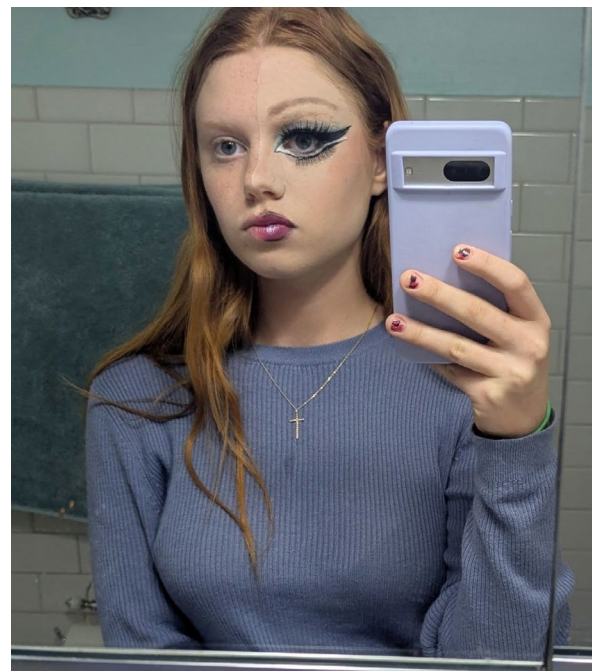
Continued from page 19

where she met her drag mother, Izzy Towers Ferrari, at a drag brunch. Towers later asked Ferrari, nervously, to adopt her. "It felt like a big deal," Towers said. "But she said yes."

The concept of chosen family, of learning through connection, is something Towers hopes to build on as she becomes more involved in Michigan's drag scene. Right now she's still on the edges of it, limited by geography and age, but her goal is clear: "I want to meet more performers and learn from them."

For Towers, drag has also been a transformation in how she sees herself. "Self-confidence has been something I've struggled with for a long time," she said, recalling her earlier high school years. "Then I started doing drag, and I was like ... huh. Maybe I'm hot."

Drag isn't about becoming someone else — it's about accessing a version of herself that feels powerful and possible. That sense of possibility carries her forward. Towers hopes to study film in college and perform



Mary Magdalene Towers. Photo: Instagram/@marymagdalenedrag

at established queer venues like Necto, but for now the focus is simpler: the next show, the next moment in the spotlight, the next unruly eyebrow tamed.

Her advice to young people watching from the wings is direct: "Do it. It doesn't matter how much skill you have right now. It's not about being ready. It's about starting."



PRIDESOURCE

**Are You Ready To
Introduce Your Business
to the LGBTQ+ Community?**

PRIDESOURCE.COM/ADVERTISE

viventhealth

EXCELLENCE IN HIV CARE + PREVENTION

**INCLUSIVE, JUDGMENT-FREE,
TEAM-BASED CARE FOR OUR COMMUNITY**

VIVENTHEALTH.ORG



HIV + STI HOTLINE

800-872-2437

MISEXUALHEALTHINFO.COM

We value diversity in the City of Ann Arbor,
and take pride in being **different** from the rest.



The City of Ann Arbor is an Equal Opportunity Employer

We are proud of our diverse workforce and our commitment to equal opportunity. We do not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived age, arrest record, color, disability, educational association, familial status, family responsibilities, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, height, HIV status, marital status, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, source of income, veteran status, victim of domestic violence or stalking, or weight in any aspect of our hiring or employment process. The City of Ann Arbor has earned a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Municipal Equality Index (MEI), which assesses lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer equality in more than 500 cities across the nation.

a2gov.org/jobs

Supporting the Community Since Before it was Cool.

100% Local Agents. 100% Client Focused.
Trillium Real Estate Helps People
Make Good Decisions.



Sandi & Linda
944 N Main St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
www.trilliumrealtors.com
734-302-3011



NEIGHBORHOOD Roofing

50 Years of Protecting Homes
& The People in Them.

Call or text today!
734-994-6500

Building Safer Spaces Together

Proudly LGBTQ+ owned and operated, we
provide high-quality roofing with honesty,
respect, and a commitment to creating safe,
welcoming homes for everyone.

**FREE ROOF
INSPECTION**

+ 10% OFF
up to \$500

We'll also donate **\$100** to a local LGBTQ+
organization with every qualifying project.



SAFE HOMES.
We use top-quality
materials and skilled
craftsmanship.

BUILT ON TRUST.
Honest pricing, clear
communication, and
warranties you can count on.

STRONGER COMMUNITY.
We proudly support
organizations that uplift our
LGBTQ+ neighbors.

Locally owned.
Community focused.



NEIGHBORHOODROOFING.COM
1377 Tefft Ct. • Saline, MI 48176

MERITHOT

CREATE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY.

Merithot helps awesome companies create remarkable brands, strategies, websites and content.

Creative Marketing made with ♥ from Ann Arbor, MI

www.merithot.com

Dr. Paul Benson's



EST. 1980: THE ORIGINAL LGBTQ CLINIC IN MICHIGAN

Quality Health Care, Experience Counts

- Preventative health services & primary care for your whole family
- State-of-the-art facility: lab, x-ray, pharmacy on site
- Most insurances accepted
- Designated a "Patient-Centered Medical Home" by Blue Cross Blue Shield, a high standard of excellence



Since 1980, Be Well Medical Center has delivered compassionate, patient-centered healthcare. Led by Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein, our dedicated team prioritizes your well-being. As credentialed HIV specialists, we offer PrEP and Doxy PEP. Our inclusive approach ensures top-quality care for all backgrounds and lifestyles.

And now with Dr. Andrew Roberts, a dedicated pediatrician specializing in care for individuals from birth to 21 years. Our clinic is now a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ youth seeking primary care.

We maintain an extensive network of specialists to refer to as appropriate. We celebrate and embrace diversity and are non-discriminatory. **ALL GENDERS WELCOME!**

We are committed to provide quality health care and to serve our patients without regard to race, nationality, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, political preference, or sexual orientation. **Our priority is your good health.**

Three Locations



Be Well Medical Center
1964 11 Mile Rd,
Berkley, MI 48072
248-544-9300



Osborn Family Medical Clinic
13560 East McNichols Rd,
Detroit, MI 48205
248 544-9300



**Community Health
Awareness Group**
1300 West Fort St.,
Detroit, MI 48226
313-963-3434 x118



Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein